Help with Discretion

Reg. No. B3092

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

VOL. XV. No. 14 AHMEDABAD — SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1951 TWO ANNAS

HANDLOOM PROBLEM — 1

[I regret there has been a long delay in publishing the following by Shri Hare Krushna Mahtab. It has been slightly condensed without injury to its arguments. This will be followed by a reply to it by Shri Shrikrishnadas Jaju and a note by me. — K. G. M.]

I must congratulate the weavers of India on the success they have achieved by their agitation in drawing the attention and sympathy of even those who were committed to the theory that the problem of handloom cannot be solved unless there is universal handspinning. It is now admitted on all hands that handloom is not inextricably linked up with handspinning. It is the handloom which first attracted Gandhiji's serious attention in the beginning. Then he gradually came to the conclusion that unless there was handspinning on a large scale, the problem of handloom would not be solved. But the situation has so much changed in the meantime that it is now considered that the problem of handloom can be solved even without widespread handspinning. Let me place the problem of handloom, as I have studied it for the purpose of calm consideration of all its aspects.

The exact number of handlooms working in India is not known because it is a flexible one. It is estimated that there are about 25 lakhs of handlooms in India and the number of handloom weavers is about 58,10,000. There is no doubt that if yarn is made available, more handlooms can be brought into operation. At the rate of 20 lb. of yarn per month per loom for regular working, 1,25,000 bales (1 bale=400 lb.) of yarn will be required every month for 25 lakhs of looms. But this much of yarn the handlooms have never got for the last several decades. During recent years the production of yarn and cloth was maximum in 1948 about 85,000 bales of yarn having been supplied per month to the handlooms. This created a glut in the market in the middle of 1949 to such an extent that even many co-operative societies had to incur heavy loss and export yarn in order to save themselves from utter ruin. It is very difficult to ascertain the exact reasons for this glut. The available statistics go to show that the handloom production since 1935-36 has all along been more than 1,250 million yards. But never before there was such a glut as in 1948 when the production was only 1,250 million yards. The probable reasons are that before 1948 there was a certain export market for the handloom cloth of India in Ceylon, Burma and a few other South-East Asian countries. Pakistan also was a great consumer of Indian handloom cloth. All these export markets became closed in 1949. In addition to this, more mill-made cloth was available in the Indian market to compete with handloom products. The handloom suffered most probably on account of these two reasons in 1948-49.

The present shortage of yarn is more keenly felt because of shortage of mill-made cloth. As soon as more mill-made cloth will be made available in the market, the demand of the weavers for more yarn will decrease proportionately. It is not difficult to plan production of yarn to feed all the working handlooms, but there are certain other aspects which have to be taken into account. Had not the mill-made cloth found an export market since 1949, the problem for handloom would have been not shortage of yarn but sale of its product. Due to cessation of trade between India and Pakistan, shortage of cotton affected the production of yarn in the mills. In 1950 for some months handlooms were supplied only 52 per cent of their requirements. Even then, no shortage was felt. Indian yarn found a ready export market in the neighbouring and other countries in as much as about a lakh of bales in 1949 and two lakh bales in 1950 were exported. Along with export of yarn, export of cloth also went on. Shortage of yarn and shortage of cloth both combined to make the problem of handloom acute indeed. It was in September and October 1950 that acuteness of yarn shortage was felt and immediately the whole matter was studied and steps were taken to ease the situation. But nobody can say that the problem is finally solved.

There are about 25,000 powerlooms working in India. Most of them are small units and employ weavers for their work. There is no control either over the handloom or over the powerloom. The suggestion that the handloom cloth may be exported and the cheaper mill-made cloth may be made available for the home consumption is not based on correct appreciation

of facts. The handloom cloth does not create an export market even though its export has always remained free. The countries which used to consume Indian handloom cloth have practically banned its import in order to help their weavers. Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma are in search of yarn and not handloom cloth. If yarn is not available from India, they might import it from other countries, but they are out to help their own weavers. Powerlooms remaining uncontrolled are in a position to purchase yarn at any price and export their goods. A large number of weavers sell their rations of yarn to the powerlooms and make a living out of it without doing the work of weaving. In addition to the powerlooms, there is a system of master weavers in Madras. It has remained an administrative problem as to how to control the powerlooms and such other types of small weaving factories.

In addition to all these, the clamour of the consumer to have cheap cloth is there. Mill-made cloth will always be cheaper than handloom cloth. If the supply of mill-made cloth is less than the minimum requirements of the consumers, then it takes the level of the price of handloom cloth. The two types of cloth bearing different prices create the difficulty of enforcing the price control. If the control is lifted, then automatically the handloom cloth goes out of existence. Here is a riddle which has to be solved.

Assuming it is so planned that all the internal requirement of cloth is met from handlooms, which are supplied with yarn made in the mills, and all the mill-made cloth is allowed to be exported, then the consumer must agree to pay the higher price and reconcile himself to the less attractive finish. The consumers and the industrial workers might as well attract the sympathy of even *khadi* lovers in favour of cheap mill-made cloth, in the same way and by the same means as the weavers have been able to secure the sympathy of even self-spinners.

There is a suggestion that the mill-made cloth may be brought to the same level of price as the handloom cloth by means of levying a cess. This has to be considered along with the new problem which it will create, namely, the rise of the cost of living index and consequent increase of the wages of industrial workers which will again increase the price of cloth, thus creating a vicious circle. It has to be very closely examined further as to whether the composite mills can be called upon to limit their weaving below a certain level and make available more yarn for the weavers. It is not the question of profit of the mill-owner that matters much, but the question of retrenchment of labour and of the continuance of mill as an economic unit has to be borne in mind. The matter cannot be over-simplified by saying that more yarn is not being made available to the weavers in order to retain the profit of the mill-owners as it is. The profit of the mill is something different from the profit of the millowner and in the profit of the mill, not only the mill-owner but a large number of workers are vitally interested.

There is no doubt that the weavers must be given sufficient yarn to earn their livelihood. The question is from where this yarn is to be found. First, there is acute cotton shortage. In 1950, India imported cotton to the extent of about Rs 80 crores and this year it will be much more because the cotton prices have very much gone up. It may be suggested that the Indian cotton may be used for making yarn for handlooms and the foreign cotton may be used for the purpose of mill-made cloth. In that case, the handlooms will produce only medium and coarse cloth and the spinning mills will have to be readjusted for that purpose. Apart from the mills producing yarn for the handloom weavers, why should not organizations like the All India Spinners Association take up the work of producing yarn by means of large scale hand-spinning, as has been taken up in Bihar by the *khadi* organization there? Capital for the work can certainly be available from Government and private sources. If organizations come forward to take up the production of yarn, then not only the weavers will be helped to a great extent, but the problem of distribution of mill-made yarn may considerably be minimized when yarn is locally produced to meet the local requirements. It was expected that when the suitable opportunity will afford itself, there would be a number of organizations in all the States imbued with the belief in the efficacy of regional and decentralized economy, to come forward and tackle the problem as it arises.

Here the problem which the weavers have posed requires production of yarn and that too in a decentralized manner. Here is an opportunity to put the theory of *khadi* into practice. It is purely an economic proposition. Large areas can be converted into regular spinning mills producing yarn at every home and feeding the handlooms. If it is suggested that Government themselves should undertake this venture, I frankly admit that they cannot, for it is not their work. But they can and must render all possible assistance if private individuals or organizations come forward to do the work. I know this programme will not fit in with the self-spinning theory. But that theory, as it is, does not fit in with the solution of the handloom problem as it has arisen.

At the end, I wonder if the complete change which this country has undergone in the pattern of her economy since 1947 has been fully realized by those who come forward to offer criticisms and suggestions on the basis of facts which are no longer in existence. It was certainly the belief

of everybody that, everything remaining normal, independence would help carrying out the policies and programmes which were enunciated in the course of the movement for independence. But when everything has changed as a result of independence specially after the partition of the country, the policies and programmes which were once advocated should be reviewed in the light of the new circumstances.

Before 1947, India was an exporter of raw materials, whereas today she is an importer of raw materials and for that import, she has to find out exports which necessarily should be of manufactured goods. Last year, India spent Rs 88 crores on import of foodgrains and Rs 80 crores on import of cotton. There was no large scale import of jute ; otherwise, that would have required some exchange also. This year the probable foreign exchange expenditure on foodgrains would be about Rs 175 crores. The increased shipping freights have further increased the cost of imports. There will be more expenditure on import of cotton. In order to finance these imports, in terms of foreign exchange, export lines also have to be developed. Out of the total export valued at Rs 522 crores, cotton textiles alone were valued at about Rs 120 crores in 1950. Cotton textile exports are at the moment only second in importance from the point of view of foreign exchange, the most important exchange earner being jute goods.

These figures will clearly show how the economic position of the country has been completely reversed after 1947. If the thinkers do not apply their mind to this drastic change of circumstances, it serves no useful purpose by dogmatically repeating well-known theories. My concrete suggestion is that individuals and private organizations should come forward and take up the production of yarn by hand-spinning and bring about regional self-sufficiency, so far as supply of cloth is concerned. This is the effective solution of all the problems which I have hinted above.

New Delhi, 21-4-'51 H. K. MAHTAB

KATAI MANDALS

It is often said that the Charkha Sangh may finally get merged into Katai Mandal organization. The Sangh will act only as a joining link and a guide between the different Katai Mandals. Is this a progress or a retrogression of one of the largest constructive organizations created by Gandhiji ?

In order to understand this we will have to dive into the past with the modern view-point. We are now independent. But of what worth is it ? We are hedged in on all sides by grave difficulties of food, cloth, finance and materials. We have to play into the hands of the great *sawkars* of the world who have developed a new kind of Imperialism. The need of the hour, therefore, is to fight this new ' Satan '.

Katai Mandal is the remedy to rid ourselves from this monetary subjugation. Every village, township or city should be so remodelled that it may not prey on the other but live in happy co-ordination.

The finances of a village can be well improved if it becomes self-sufficient in food and clothing.

Gandhiji has given us the *charkha* with this intent and purpose. And it is for us — the *khadi* lovers — to prove its worth.

Charkha Sangh has taken up this as its mission. The reorientation of the *charkha* with this new outlook is the Katai Mandal organization.

It is only two years since this work began. The progress so far made is quite satisfactory. There are more than 700 recognized Mandals and about 500 under observation, as will be seen from the following table :

Name of the Area	Recognized No. of Katai Mandals	Non-recognized No. of Katai Mandals
1. Assam ..	3	—
2. Bengal ..	56	52
3. Barida ..	2	11
4. Bihar ..	—	60
5. Orissa ..	67	25
6. Andhra ..	54	50
7. Tenali Vibhag ..	15	3
8. Shrikakulam Vibhag ..	14	—
9. Hyderabad ..	15	8
10. Madras Vibhag ..	8	—
11. Tamilnad ..	160	—
12. Kerala ..	101	40
13. Karnatak ..	18	25
14. Maharashtra ..	31	2
15. Bombay ..	11	—
16. Gujarat ..	54	8
17. Vidarbha ..	10	—
18. Nagpur Vibhag ..	11	28
19. Chanda Vibhag ..	16	9
20. Chattisgadh Vibhag ..	18	31
21. Narsimhapur ..	6	6
22. Madhya Bharat ..	13	67
23. Rajasthan ..	33	28
24. Punjab ..	32	5
25. Ranchi Vibhag ..	—	3
26. Uttar Pradesh ..	4	18
Total ..	752	479

To begin with, the Sangh has proposed the following programme :

1. Spinning for self-sufficiency in cloth.
2. Personal cleanliness, cleanliness of the surroundings and the transformation of all filth into useful manure.
3. Helpful mutual co-operation.
4. Weaving of cloth for household requirements.
5. Self-sufficiency in food and cloth for making the village self-sufficient.

Sevagram, 16-5-'51 N. R. SOWANY

HARIJAN

June 2 1951

HELP WITH DISCRETION

I am glad to find that the suggestions made by me in my articles for *Co-ordination of Handicrafts and Mechanized Industries* are by no means novel and the first of their kind. In fact Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta had drawn up a full scheme on these lines several years ago at the suggestion of Gandhiji himself for being placed before the then Government of Bengal, under Mr Casey. As I propose to place before the readers his latest views on this subject, I shall not say more about it here.

I have also received a letter from Shri C. A. Aiyamuthu, Honorary Khadi Adviser to the Government of Madras and once a Secretary of the Tamil Nad branch of the A. I. S. A. Among various matters discussed by him, he comments upon my suggestions as follows:

> "With regard to your suggestion in the *Harijan* dated 31-3-'51 to fix one crude rate for all cloth produced with different means, I am glad to say that it is a nice idea. I threw almost the same suggestion some twelve years ago. Rajaji was then the Premier of Madras. The mill cloth was sold at three annas per yard, the loom cloth at 4 annas and *khadi* at 8 annas. The total production of mill cloth in the province of Madras was then eight crores of yards. I asked Rajaji to levy a 'Khadi-Mill' co-ordination tax of one anna per yard on every yard of mill cloth produced and give it to the Charkha Sangh. All the three types of cloth viz. Mill, Loom and *Khadi* should be sold at one price viz., at 4 annas per yard. The total production of *khadi* in the Madras Presidency was then about half a crore of yards. The levy of one anna on mill cloth would come to 50 lakhs of rupees. The loss of selling *khadi* at par with the price of mill cloth will be 12½ lakhs of rupees. There will be a surplus of 37½ lakhs per year. I asked Rajaji to continue this plan for a period of five years within which time the surplus will mount to Rs 187½ lakhs and with this amount at its disposal the Charkha Sangh would be enabled to give technical and mechanical aid to the spinning wheel and thus make it efficient and popular. This suggestion of mine appeared in a 'Khadi Nool' a monthly journal then edited by me. Rajaji pacified me with an annual subsidy and grant of one lakh of rupees and the matter ended at that. You have now come forward with a more or less similar suggestion. My present feeling is that the Government is incapable of administering any such scheme. The reasons are obvious. The experience of the past decade have made me lose faith in the capacity of the Government and the honesty of our people.....
> Under such conditions, your suggestion, though well conceived, cannot be worked. It will create another opportunity to unsocial elements to exploit and abuse. Experience has shown that mere State protection for any industry brings about only bad results. In the absence of protection there is competition, and competition paves the will and the way for improvement in the means, technique and quality of things produced. But when there is protection, the tendency is for exploitation of the same for profiteering instead of improving the quality and cheapening cost by greater technological efforts. So your suggestion to fix one price for the crude cloth made by any process has this danger. The quality instead of improving will deteriorate every day because the price is fixed and guaranteed by the State. All incentive for improvement will be shut and sealed."

I do not share his pessimism. Honesty and desire to improve may have gone down to a very low level just now, but they are not extinct. Indeed they cannot be as long as human life exists in the world. When the monsoon sets in all sorts of seeds put into or lying in the ground grow with intensity. They include useful crops as well as weeds. If conditions are made favourable, useful crops thrive and weeds become almost extinct. Under adverse conditions, you see nothing but weeds densely spread everywhere, and you discern a useful plant with great difficulty. You cannot say that it is no use trying to clear that field, regarding it as a hopeless task. You must begin from a corner and go on inch by inch. That is how our ancestors, undoubtedly much less in numbers than we are now and with cruder instruments than those available to us, cleared the thick forests of India and made a garden of it. Nor can you say, do not give any protection to the useful plant; it will not be as strong as it would be if it is allowed to fight its way against the obstructing weeds with its own strength. In the same way, you cannot give up your effort of improving the society out of despair, nor withhold protection to the physically weak industries out of fear that they would lose incentive for improvement. At every stage a wise minister must use his discretion to find the proper measure of help, which will enhance growth without killing the incentive to improve.

Wardha, 11-5-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

CONTROLS AND BLACK-MARKETS

> "In your article on Controls and Rationing the remedy suggested for the economic ills that we suffer from is 'to put a voluntary control on the instincts of acquisitiveness, self-indulgence, and individualistic view of life. We must work for all, live for all, and suffer for all.....'
>
> "What to say of the black-market, all our calamities, economic, social, or political, would vanish and we could enjoy eternal peace and plenty, if we could rise to the heights envisaged by you. But the trouble is that the world is peopled with saints and sinners, gods and devils, savages and civilized men, herbivorous and carnivorous, and creatures in all stages of moral evolution in-between the two extremes. It is said that the leopard cannot change its spots, then why expect a rogue to turn out a saint overnight, or even in a lifetime? Instincts are the products of repeated experience in incarnations untold, and man is consequently helpless against them even if he had the will to put up a fight, which is problematic. They are harder than the diamond, are seated in the *chitta* (subtle body?) itself, and must persist until the *chitta* is disintegrated, and the finite becomes one with the Infinite.
>
> "So we should take the world as we find it, and propose a remedy that the patient would take. The doctor can achieve nothing without the co-operation of the suffering man.

"To my mind, there are only two alternatives before us: an out-and-out individualistic economy and absolutely free market, or a totalitarian economy of the Soviet pattern. There is no half-way house. Take courage in both hands and choose the one or the other. Both are bad, take to the lesser evil of the two. No human institutions were ever perfect, and none will ever be. To live in the work-a-day world and to hanker after perfection, is a contradiction in terms, and savours of a cry for the moon. —Dreamer"

This is a curious *nom-de-plume* for one who pleads for a realistic approach to the problem. Whichever of the two alternatives suggested by the writer is adopted, let it be realized that none will work for even a moderate degree of happiness, unless the persons expected to implement it have an adequate amount of integrity, honesty and sense of civic duties. It does not require men to be gods or saints to observe obvious rules of honest dealing and sense of citizenship. Indeed, honesty as such is hardly a rule of a very idealistic moral code. It is just a piece of wise policy, i.e. a rule of conduct suggested by intelligent self-interest. It is wrong to entertain the belief that leading honest life is too difficult for ordinary men.

The writer's reference to the doctrines of incarnations and disintegration of the *chitta* etc. is an instance of what Gita has called *prajnaavaada* (philosophical nonsense). To explain away all the base propensities in man as 'products of repeated experience in incarnations untold' is lethargy, self-complacency and want of effort. There are dozens of good and noble propensities in man to a few base ones. It depends upon the nature of efforts and environments, whether the good or bad ones will develop. The present downward trend in morals must be regarded as the outburst of an epidemic. However serious a disease might appear at the time, it has a short-lived existence in an intensive and all-pervading form. Even if it cannot be totally annihilated, and might persist in an endemic form in a few exceptionally bad spots, its highly destructive character can be quickly controlled by suitable measures. In the same way moral degradation of the present type is not the nature of man. It is just an infection, and we must, to use the words of the writer, "take courage in both the hands" and determine to destroy it. Try with determination and it will be seen that it is not so difficult to be good and honest as it seems. There is no need to take a rebirth to be just fair and honest.

Wardha, 5-5-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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[Vinoba's Speech at Nizamabad on 26-3-'51 freely translated from Hindustani.]

Villager and Townsman

Vinoba was glad that he could speak to the people directly, as they all understood Hindustani. He came to Nizamabad on account of their pressing invitation. But generally he desired to visit the villages, because it enabled him to come into intimate contact with the people. In a village it was possible for him to visit almost every house in less than a couple of hours. That was impossible in a city, where a person did not often know even his next-door neighbour. He distinguished between a townsman and a villager not by knowing his place of residence, but by enquiring whether he knew who and what his neighbours were. If he could give satisfactory answers, he was a villager; otherwise he was a man of the town. People in the towns developed the habit of living for themselves; and taking no interest in the lives of their neighbours. The places where they seemed to meet together and with a common purpose was at the counter of a ticket-office or shop, where they would stand in queue for more than an hour without exchanging a word or experiencing a feeling of companionship.

Towns no Abode of the Wise

Vinoba did not wish to suggest that this was a development of just modern city life. It was perhaps so even in ancient times. He related here the story of the Upanishad, where a king having heard the fame of a particular savant, with a desire to meet him asked his charioteer to find out his whereabouts. The charioteer made enquiries in every nook and corner of the capital, but could find nobody, who knew anything about the wise man. He reported his failure to the king. The latter enquired where he had tried to seek for him, and on learning the details said, "You are a fool to seek after a wise man in a town. Go into the surrounding forest areas, and you might find him there." And the charioteer went back, and returned successful. The king thereafter went to the savant and was pleased to acquire knowledge from him. We in this generation might feel surprised, Vinoba said, that the Upanishad sage did not expect to find any wise man in a city, while we in our own times have always opened our schools and colleges in towns. Has the Goddess of Learning forgotton her love for the seat of lotus flowers and become fond of wooden chairs and benches? He did not think so. There is no more learning and wisdom in towns and cities in the present than there was in the past.

Current Education

Indeed, we had *vidyalayas* in towns. But they were not places (*aalayas*) for advancement of true knowledge, but for its liquidation (*laya*). The schools and colleges gave nothing to the pupils, which would help them in life. They added to the number of unemployed and brought about their demoralization. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel decried this education as useless, but he could not stop it. Vinoba had long since advocated the closure of these so-called educational institutions. No harm would be done if all these closed for a year or so. Even as it was, the schools and colleges had vacations of five to six months in the year, and the vacation had to be extended only a little longer. Parents would be far more benefitted if their sons and daughters remained tuitionless till we had evolved the right type of education than by giving them the present training at considerable expense to reap at the end merely an army of dehumanized and decultured good-for-nothing youths. The present educated men were a burden to the nation, Vinoba said. They taught no action, developed no healthy personality and brought no satisfaction to the trainees.

Earnest Youth

He did not, however, despair of the modern youth, Vinoba said. In spite of the useless training through which they passed he was agreeably surprised to find

that their soul was still sound. Wherever he met them, he found them anxious to learn something genuinely good and useful. They yearned for a way which would show them how they could satisfy their aspiration to work for some noble end. They were attracted to Socialism, Communism etc. because they were in dead earnest to seek a solution for the present ills of the society. So when Vinoba placed before them his programme of physical labour, they responded to it warmly. This was a great ray of hope, and Vinoba saw in it the evidence of God's kind concern for the people of India. He has not forsaken us, and our country could not go to ruin while such ardent youths lived.

India's Merits and Sins

India was a blessed country. दुर्लभं भारते जन्म । —'Birth in Bharat is rare', our poets have always sung. There was something peculiar in the history of India's effort for human progress, on account of which, in spite of her chequered career, she was looked upon by the troubled nations of the world as the pathfinder. Vinoba thought that the reason was that India continuously produced great souls, who transcended the limitations of sect, caste, country, race etc. and looked upon the good Earth herself — and not upon any limited region thereof — as their motherland. That made India a *punya bhumi* — land of meritoriousness.

But India was also a land of sins. And in spiritual accounting merit and sin were not set off against each other. It was not that if there were five measures of good and three measures of sin, you would have to your credit two measures of good. The punishment for sin must be suffered separately and independently of the reward for merit. And India testified to this law too. They had committed the sins of caste-distinctions, false prestige and idleness. They had shunned honest labour and looked upon it contemptuously. A *brahman* would not work; a *sannyasi* would not work; so also an educated man, a rich man, a god's man (devotee); in short, every one tried to absolve himself from the responsibility to work. Those who toiled were looked down as ignorant, worldly, less respectable, even low and out-caste. For this sin, India had been punished with subjugation for several centuries. It was possible, Vinoba considered, that the period of her sentence was now over, and God, who was always kind even in His punishments, had decided to give India an opportunity of turning a new leaf in her history. He could not otherwise explain the easy attainment of independence in which Gandhiji was made to play the part of just an humble agent. It was not certainly by our own strength that we had achieved independence. Gandhiji could not have done it, unless God willed that we should achieve it. That was also the reason, why we did not show any signs of radical change in our lives in spite of this remarkable attainment. And except by assigning it to God's kindness, he could not explain the burning desire in the youths of even such unworthy schools and colleges to devote themselves to higher ends. He hailed this aspiration and looked upon it with great hope.

Message to the Youth

The word which Vinoba wanted to give to the youth was *samyayóga* — practice of equality. He spoke about it to Congressmen also. They had a sixty year old organization at their back. It was an organization reared by the efforts and sacrifices of some of the greatest men of our country. He uttered the same *mantra* to the Socialists, who too were his friends. He himself carried no political label. If they could not give up theirs, let them retain them. But let all train themselves for *samyayoga* — practice of equality.

Sarvodaya could not come through propaganda and speeches. It could come only through labour. Every one must perform labour according to his strength. For the weakest, Gandhiji had suggested the *charkha*. He asked people to select any work of labour they liked in which all might join hands — the rich as well as the poor, the educated as well as the illiterate, the urban as well as the villager, the high-caste as well as the low-caste. If all took to a programme of labour, all distinctions and conflicts would be resolved. There would be no conflict even between towns and villages.

DISHONESTY AT HIGH LEVEL

The following news-item appeared in the *Hindustan Times* of May 15:

> "An intensive campaign to root out the practice of subletting Government quarters has been launched by the Estate Officer of the Government of India. A large number of Government employees who have been allotted quarters by the Estate Office have sublet them at abnormally high rents to outsiders. For one room they charge a rent of Rs 50 a month. In better localities the rent is higher.
>
> "In this connection, a thorough checking of Vinay Nagar, one of the recently built colonies for Government employees near Willingdon Airport, was recently undertaken by the Estate Office. A squad of 50 officers and men made a house-to-house inquiry to find out how many of the residents were outsiders. Fifty cases of sub-letting were detected by the authorities and stringent action is to be taken against them."

This practice of subletting Government quarters, of course, deserves severest punishment. But there hangs a tale. I understand on good authority that a similar malpractice exists among the members of the Parliament. A number of M. P.'s sublet the bungalows allotted to them and recover a substantial portion of the rent payable by them to the Government. When the law-makers set such an example, it is no wonder that the middle-class Government employees imitate the "tricks of trade" of their masters. I suggest that a thorough inquiry be made to find out how many honourable members of the Parliament have been making money by harbouring "outsiders' in their bungalows. Those guilty of indiscipline and illegal behaviour must be severely punished and should forfeit their seats in the Parliament.

There is also another malpractice prevailing among the M.P.s which is much resented by the people. Members are entitled to first class railway fare when they go to or return from New Delhi for parliamentary work. But many of them do not travel first. This means considerable saving to them at the expense of the poor tax-payer. Sometime ago, a suggestion was mooted in the Congress Parliamentary Party that members should be given a first class pass which could be used by them when travelling for the work of the Parliament. This measure could have successfully checked the existing evil. But, for reasons best known to the Congress Party, the proposal was, perhaps, 'talked out'. It is essential that members of Parliament should behave better. The people are, and rightly, very critical of the actions of their leaders and if there is a class of Papers, which brings out these facts in a sensational manner, Government must thank themselves for it.

Kanpur, 18-5-'51 S. N. AGARWAL

THE VANASPATI MENACE

It is indeed tragic that our responsible leaders do not realize still the menace of *vanaspati* to village economy and health. Conceding for a moment that the use of *vanaspati* has no deleterious effect on health, the advent of *vanaspati* has spelled the ruin of *ghee* and oil cottage industries, making these essential articles of food both scarce and dear by taking away this manufacture from the villagers, for whom they are a vital subsidiary industry.

It is necessary to examine these facts in detail to convince any unbiassed person, how the *vanaspati* manufacturers, by buying up large quantities of groundnut as soon as, or even before, the crop is ready, have caused its price to shoot up to an extent, where it becomes impossible for the *ghani*-keeper or even a small oil-mill to buy and stock it. The price of oil has consequently risen to a level, at which poor people cannot afford to buy this essential and only source of fat. It is not that the *vanaspati* manufacturer buys up the whole crop, but by his bulk buying he creats a shortage and raises the price unnaturally. He can very well afford to do so, because he sells his product at a very high price, compared to oil (about Rs 600/- per ton more). Not all the extra price of groundnut goes to the farmer ; the middlemen and agents get the lion's share of this inflated price.

Now about its effect on the *ghee* industry. It should be remembered that *ghee* is made by our farmers as a subsidiary product on a small scale, and not by a few big dairies. The farmer has some by-product of his crops, on which he can maintain a few milch animals at a small cost. He makes *ghee* from the milk of these animals. Hitherto he was able to sell his *ghee*, either in the village or the nearby town, either by himself or through a village trader. He could get some cash, besides whey which is a very essential article of his diet. Since the advent of *vanaspati* it has become almost impossible to sell his *ghee* at a fair price. In order to compete, adulteration with *vanaspati* has become common. Thus, while on the one hand it has become difficult to sell good *ghee* at a fair price, on the other it has become equally difficult to get unadulterated reliable *ghee*. A vicious circle is formed, where an honest producer can not get a fair price for his product and a buyer cannot get pure *ghee*. The main cause of this is the easy availability of *vanaspati* for adulteration. The effect of this vicious circle can be seen in the villages. Less and less farmers are keeping cattle for *ghee*-making and rearing crops useful for fodder and food. They sow cash crops, and whatever milk is produced is sold away to the cities. Formerly anybody could buy good *ghee* easily in any village, but today very little *ghee* is available there, and the use of *vanaspati* is spreading in the villages.

If this continues long, we shall soon reach a stage when the farmers will be growing cash crops, buying *vanaspati* and (those who can afford) milk powder for their needs, and gradually depleting the soil fertility, for want of manure.

This is the logical result of the Government's present policy of drift, delay and hesitation in dealing with the now universal adulteration with *vanaspati*.

Thus, on the one hand *vanaspati* spells ruin to the *ghanis* and cattle-keeping in the villages, and on the other it takes away essential articles of food such as oil, *ghee* and whey from the diet of the poor people. How can a Government claiming to serve the poor contemplate this state of affairs with equanimity passes comprehension.

PANNALAL JAVERI

NOTES

Earthworms in America

The following note is taken from *American Reporter* of May 2, 1951, p. 14 :

> 'American agricultural scientists have found that earthworms are an added tool for farmers in making soil more productive by aerating and fertilizing it. Earthworms work day and night in all kinds of weather, loosening the earth and making it more porous so that it will admit water and air.
>
> 'The earthworm also eats whatever is in the soil and leaves rich humus deposits underground in the root zone of plants and trees. These deposits contain magnesium, nitrogen, phosphorus and potash that fertilize the soil. In turning up the subsoil the earthworms also make whatever valuable minerals are already in the ground available for plants to feed on. It is estimated that 50,000 earthworms will turn over 1 cubic yard of earth a month making 1 ton (.91 metric ton) of rich topsoil.
>
> 'Earthworms are also considered economical, since once put into the ground, they multiply rapidly. Raising earthworms for sale has developed into an enterprising business in several parts of the United States. One earthworm hatchery now sells and ships worms to Norway, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, the Canal Zone, Canada and Alaska — Land.'

What a good thing it would be if we imported earthworms instead of ready made American shirts, which sometimes cost over thirty rupees each ?

V. G. D.

Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati Shorthand Classes in Wardha

Shorthand classes in Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati will be conducted under the auspices of the Govindram Seksaria College of Commerce and Economics, Wardha, from the 16th July, 1951. The correspondence course will be finished within six months and the reporting course within ten months. Besides, students will be trained in Nagari Typewriting. All the students completing their course will be examined and diplomas will be awarded by the College to the successful candidates. All those who are interested in the courses should apply to the Principal stating their age and qualifications before the 30th June, 1951. Printed application forms can be had from the College office on sending stamps worth 9 pies.

The fees for the correspondence course will be Rs 60 and that for the reporting course will be Rs 120.

Accommodation for a few students is available in the College hostels. Seats will have to be reserved by paying Rs 25 in advance.

As the Government offices, private institutions and newspapers are badly in need of Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati stenotypists, it is hoped that students will take full advantage of these classes.

The system taught in the College is recognized by the Committee appointed by the Constituent Assembly of India. During the academic sessions, 1948-49 and 1949-50, students from various parts of India such as Assam, Bihar, U.P., Vindhya Pradesh, Bombay, Madras, Cutch, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat were admitted to these classes and have received the diploma, *Shighralipi Pravin*.

THE PRICE OF GHEE

The very high price of *ghee* is often given out as a reason for the manufacture of *vanaspati*. Shri Radhakrishna Bajaj made a study of the prices of various articles of food during recent years in comparison with *ghee*, and has arrived at the following conclusion :

The rate of buffalo-*ghee* in 1937 varied from Re 1 to Re 1/4 per seer ; the present price is Rs 5 to 6/8 per seer. As against this the equivalent of one seer of *ghee* in the years 1937 and 1951 respectively is as follows :

		1937 Quantity	Rate	
Linseed cake	srs.	15 to 19	Rs. 75	per ton
Cotton seed	lb.	46 to 58	Rs. 17	per *khandi*
Fodder (*kadba*)	bundles	50 to 65	Rs. 2	per hundred
Oil	srs.	4 to 5	as. 5	per seer
Juar	srs.	20 to 25	Rs. 10	per *khandi*

		1951 Quantity	Rate	
Linseed cake	srs.	15 to 18	Rs. 380	per ton
Cotton seed	lb.	40 to 50	Rs. 100	per *khandi*
Fodder (*kadba*)	bundles	50 to 65	Rs. 10	per hundred
Oil	srs.	2¾ to 3¼	Rs. 2	per seer
Juar	srs.	15 to 19½	Rs. 67	per *khandi*

The above table shows that the price of *ghee* has, indeed, shown a comparatively less advance than other articles needed for cattle or human food. In fact it has advanced only to the extent linseed cake and fodder have advanced.

The cow-*ghee* has always been and will remain a little costlier than the buffalo-*ghee*. This is unavoidable until we are in a position to improve the cow-breed to a considerable extent. This will take some decades even with intensive effort.

Consumers of *vanaspati* need again and again to be told that the *ghee*-like substance which they eat is nothing but refined ground-nut or other oil. It need not be frozen. Freezing makes it less easily digestible, and more costly. It is the premium which they pay in order to deceive themselves into the belief that they ate *ghee*. They not only deceive themselves but also encourage the fraud of adulteration. If *vanaspati* was not patronized, a great and easily available adulterant would disappear.

Wardha, 3-5-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

SECRECY IN BALLOTING

Shri K. Ramanujam, an Engineer of Salem Junction (Madras), has designed an ingenious box for preserving secrecy and preventing frauds in voting.

The box is said to have been examined, among others, by Shri C. Rajagopalachari (then Governor-General of India), Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya (then President of the Congress), President Rajendraprasad and several other ministers, prominent leaders, officers etc. All of them were highly satisfied with the invention, and regarded it as the best fraud-proof device they had come across. They have all congratulated the inventor and several of them have recommended its adoption for the ensuing elections.

But now the question is who will adopt it ? The Election Commissioner's office is said to be feeling nervous about it, as it has never been tried before. It has been before leaders in Governments for some years, and could have been tried at any bye-election or Municipal or Local Board election. But where is the leader or an authority who has the interest and the leisure to try, or direct the trial of an engineer of no influence ? And so an admittedly good and ingenious invention is lying uncared for, while costly boxes of less merits are being prepared.

I do not know why it should be impossible for the Election Commissioner and his staff to examine it thoroughly, hold a demonstration through a mock election if necessary, and see if it cannot be tried in a few districts at least. How will Indian genius be encouraged if those who run the show, will fight shy of it when it comes to actual practice ?

Shri Ramanujam has obtained excellent certificates from about 50 men of importance. But in the absence of active help, they are like certificates of men, who confidently assert that there is no more than knee-deep water in the river, but at the same time for fear of some mishap see that no one walks through it !

Wardha, 17-5-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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Subscription Rates — Inland : One year, Rs. 6; Six months, Rs. 3 ; Foreign : One year, Rs. 8 or 14 s. or $ 2.
Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 9.